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SUBJECT: MUHAMMADIYAH YOUTH CONCERNED ABOUT EXTREMISM AMONG
ITS LEADERSHIP

REF: JAKARTA 10134

Classified By: Political Officer Catherine E. Sweet, Reason 1.4(d)

11. (C) Summary. On October 2 and 3, Poloff made courtesy calls on Muhammadiyah Youth Chairman Izzul Muslimin and Secretary General Gunawan Hidayat. As part of its six-month

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strategic plan, the Muhammadiyah Youth Central Board will carry out a "census" of local Muhammadiyah Youth leaders nationwide, designed in part to determine whether these local officials are loyal to Muhammadiyah or, conversely, are affiliated with other, more radical Islamist groups like Majelis Mujahidin Islam, Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia or Dewan Dakwah Islam Indonesia, which have been challenging mainstream Muslim organizations. While the Central Board suspects that a significant number of local Muhammadiyah Youth officials hold dual loyalties, they have not been able to quantify the extent of the problem. The Central Board will try to "pull back" those leaders with dual loyalties; failing that, the individuals will be expelled from Muhammadiyah Youth. Muhammadiyah Youth is also considering inviting radical groups to join in an accord on what materials and methodologies should be used to train Muslim religious leaders; they believe the radicals would be receptive. Finally, Muslimin reiterated Muhammadiyah Youth's opposition to the establishment of an Islamic state. End Summary.

"They Must Choose:" Poll to Determine Leaders' Loyalties

12. (C) On October 2 and 3, Poloff made courtesy calls on the Chairman and Secretary General of Muhammadiyah Youth (Pemuda Muhammadiyah), Izzul Muslimin and Gunawan Hidayat. Pemuda Muhammadiyah is one of eight autonomous organizations falling under the Muhammadiyah rubric (the other seven are Aisyiyah, a women's organization; Nasviatul Aisyiyah, the women's Pemuda Muhammadiyah counterpart; Ikatan Remaja Muhammadiyah, the junior student wing; Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah, for university students; Tapak Suci Putra Muhammadiyah, a martial arts group; and Hisbul Wathan, a scouting troop). Muslimin estimates that Muhammadiyah Youth's current membership totals approximately seven million, not all of whom are members of the parent Muhammadiyah (only those who would like to serve in leadership positions are required to join the larger organization). According to him, Muhammadiyah Youth's primary function is helping young Muslims realize their potential to carry out Muhammadiyah's overall goal: bringing Muslims back to original Islamic teachings and convincing non-Muslims to join the faith so that a "true" Islamic community may be realized.

13. (C) Secretary General Gunawan described the organization's six-month strategic plan, which covers both the mundane (fostering business networks among Muhammadiyah entrepreneurs) and the unexpected. An example of the latter is the Muhammadiyah Youth Central Board's decision to carry out a "census" of local Muhammadiyah Youth leaders nationwide, designed to measure how adept they are at proselytizing (dakwah) and articulating Muhammadiyah's mission. However, a more important goal of the census is determining whether these local officials are loyal to Muhammadiyah or, conversely, are affiliated with other, more radical Islamist groups like Majelis Mujahidin Islam (MMI, led by Abu Bakar Ba'asyir), Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) or Dewan Dakwah Islam Indonesia (DDII).

14. (C) According to Gunawan, extremist groups have been trying to "infiltrate" Muhammadiyah for at least two years. While the Central Board suspects that a significant number of local Muhammadiyah Youth officials hold dual loyalties, they have not been able to quantify the extent of the problem. They hope that with the census, they will have hard data upon which they may act. (Note. Assessing the officials' loyalty is particularly important since Muhammadiyah Youth is often the proving ground for future Muhammadiyah leaders; current Muhammadiyah Chairman Din Syamsuddin, for one, is a former Muhammadiyah Youth Chairman. End Note.)

15. (C) Gunawan said that elected Muhammadiyah Youth officials are not permitted to affiliate with organizations like MMI and HTI (whose ideologies differ widely from Muhammadiyah's). If the census finds that an elected leader has sympathies for such hard-line groups, the Central Board will try to "pull him back" to Muhammadiyah. Failing that,

the leader will be expelled from Muhammadiyah Youth. "They must leave," commented Gunawan. Some former Muhammadiyah Youth members

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who opted to leave the organization and join ranks with radical groups, and found that their reasons for leaving were generally personal or rooted in dissatisfaction with Muhammadiyah's ideology.

16. (C) Gunawan noted that radical organizations are challenging mainstream Muslim organizations (particularly the youth and student branches and especially in Jakarta), citing Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia and the Indonesian Muslim Student Action Union (KAMMI, the student wing of the Prosperous Justice Party, or PKS) as particularly aggressive. He said that these groups must be monitored to see what recruitment methods they are using, how they are training their members, and how they are using the media to advance their agendas. Gunawan commented that the hardliners have taken advantage of popular rage over the situation in Iraq and, most recently, the war in Lebanon to attract supporters.

Talking to the Radicals

17. (C) With regard to violent radical groups like MMI, Gunawan said the Muhammadiyah Youth Central Board believes in the power of dialogue to convince the radicals to renounce violence. In fact, he said, Muhammadiyah Youth has come up with a specific "ideological re-education" program for MMI. They are also considering inviting radical groups to join in an accord on what materials and methodologies should be used to train Muslim religious leaders, so that when a group carries out an action whose legitimacy is questioned by others (for example, MMI's attacks on the Ahmadiyah sect), there are agreed-upon references which may be consulted and used to referee the dispute. Although Muhammadiyah Youth has not yet presented this idea to their hard-line colleagues, Gunawan believes this would be an attractive proposal for the radicals since "it is not political, but is just about training."

18. (C) In contrast to their extremist rivals, Chairman

Muslimin volunteered that Muhammadiyah Youth is opposed to the establishment of an Islamic state. Muslimin pointed to the difficulty, among other issues, of determining whose interpretation of shari'a should be applied. He added that Muhammadiyah Youth also disagreed with the creation of local shari'a bylaws ("perda syariah"), but noted that the appellation "shari'a" was being applied too broadly. Rather, he contended, some of the so-called perda syariah, such as anti-gambling statutes, were instead "morality laws." Muslimin indicated support for such laws, which complement Muhammadiyah's guiding principle of encouraging government to rule in a way that is consistent with Islamic principles, while still remaining technically secular. Muslimin was curious about state and local laws in the United States, asking whether alcohol, for example, was banned in certain areas.

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